

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL****Minutes of the Bridgnorth Town Council Meeting held in the Annexe, College House on  
Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 at 6.45pm.**

- Present:** R Connolly (Mayor)  
I Wellings (Deputy Mayor)  
C Aked  
S Barlow  
A Chetter  
D Cooper  
N Cooper  
R Ireland  
K Sawbridge BEM
- In Attendance:** Mrs R Williams, Deputy Town Clerk  
6 Members of the public
- Absent:** Councillor T Green  
Councillor L Neal  
Councillor R Seabright

**0153/2324 WELCOME**

The Mayor issued a welcome to the meeting.

**0154/2324 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor C Aked  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to receive the apologies and reasons for absence for the following Councillors:

Councillor C Baines	Unwell
Councillor J Buckley	Alternative commitment
Councillor L Rochelle	Unwell
Councillor E Marshall	Personal reasons

**0155/2324 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were declared.

**0156/2324 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following questions had been received prior to the meeting:

1. Was the decision to undertake immediate repairs to the retaining wall of the Cliff Railway taken by unanimous resolution of the Town Council?
2. How many Councillors voted for the resolution?
3. Was the decision to proceed with the work without putting it out to tender by unanimous resolution of the Town Council?
4. How many Councillors voted for the resolution?

The Mayor thanked the member of the public for their questions and informed them that a written reply would be forthcoming.

The member of the public asked for the answers to be comprehensive and to include information detailed in the minutes of the Town Council meetings.

**0157/2324 MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor R Connolly  
Abstention Councillor S Barlow

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor I Wellings, seconded by Councillor S Barlow  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Councillor A Chetter joined the meeting at this point.

Members noted the minutes of the Extraordinary Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023.

The minutes from the Extraordinary Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were deferred to the next meeting of Council.

**0158/2324 MAYOR'S AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S DIARY**

Members noted the Mayor's Diary for October 2023:

10 October 2023 Visited Crowsmill Craft Centre  
14 October 2023 Opened Fone Fella shop on High Street  
14 October 2023 Attended Edith Piaf concert at Castle Hall  
26 October 2023 Attended Art House event at Bishop Percy's House  
28 October 2023 Attended League of Friends Coffee Morning

**0159/2324 MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

There were no members questions.

**0160/2324 SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR**

Members were provided with a written report from Councillor J Buckley:

**Financial position 2023-24:** Current projections have identified a £20.5m shortfall in this year's budget, with a further £23m deficit predicted for 2024-25. The "Transformation team" in the Office of the Chief Executive are looking at all potential savings across every department of the Council. This includes deleting vacant posts and seeking to manage demand by using alternative delivery mechanisms (e.g. IT at home for elderly care patients) as well as "stepping down" support for families accessing early help, to prevent children going into care.

**October's Cabinet meeting** voted to consult on re-instating the public space protection order on dog fouling and stray dogs. Finally, after over 3 years of no powers to prosecute, this could mean that Council officers and PCSOs can fine offenders of **dog fouling** with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The Consultation on Dog fouling and stray dogs: Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) is now live:

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/getinvolved/](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/getinvolved/) until 21 December 2023 so please have your say.



**November's cabinet meeting** will consider the annual infrastructure statement (i.e. the list of Community Infrastructure Levy – CIL projects for next financial year) so town and parish councils should be prepared for this timetable.

### **The North West Relief Road (NWRR)**

The long-awaited planning permission request for the road was discussed at the Northern Planning Committee on 31 October. Planning officers recommended approval with conditions relating to mitigating the water bore hole contamination risk; environmental risks, carbon impact and impact on residents.

The big change is that following the announcement to cancel HS2, the Government has announced the Government transport funds can now be re-allocated to pay the costs of the North West Relief Road "in full". This is expected to be approximately £230m for 3.9 miles of road. It means that Shropshire Council is no longer faced with a large bill for this project. Meanwhile the Environment Agency has reduced its objections to an acceptance of the road, if the planning conditions are met.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding the meeting and debate and vote. During the planning consultation, over 5,000 objections were logged – the largest number ever. The meeting was live streamed and is still available on You Tube.

There was a large protest outside the meeting of over 100 people. After 4 hours of debating the members voted 6 in favour of the road and 5 against, largely along party lines.

The applicant (Shropshire Council) must now bring the proposal back to the committee with evidence of meeting the planning conditions, in particular to satisfy the EA concerns over the water supply contamination issue. The Council has put out a press release saying they hope to secure Full Business Case approval by Spring 2024; and start digging the road in Summer 2025. First of all though, they are still waiting for official confirmation in writing that central government will fund 100% of the road's costs (estimated at £230m).

### **Live Consultations:**

- **Care at Home Consultation.** For carers, families, professionals and stakeholders. Please have your say before cuts will change how the Council supports care at home. [Care at home consultation | Shropshire Council](#) Deadline 1 Dec.
- **Vibrant Shropshire Cultural Compact Survey:** have your say on future events and content from the cultural compact. Deadline 1 Dec
- **Shropshire Youth Survey:** help make your community better for you and other young people in Shropshire. Deadline 1 Dec.
- **SEND information, advice and support services survey.** Deadline 6 Dec.
- **Dog fouling and stray dogs:** Public space protection order (PSPO) Deadline 21 Dec.



- **We are awaiting the launch of the SEN and Disability School Transport Assistance Consultation** (where the Council is seeking to cut funding for school transport) to open in September – we would encourage as many responses as possible.

**Future Council Meetings:** Don't forget all meetings are public so you can attend or observe online:

- 20 Nov. Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee
- 22 Nov: Cabinet – financial monitoring, performance, STAR housing, SAND covenant, ombudsman complaint code.
- 23 Nov. Audit Committee
- 4 Dec: Transformation & Improvement scrutiny committee
- 12 Dec: Southern Planning Committee
- 13 Dec: Cabinet – strategic CIL project list, River Quality T&F report, Capital Strategy T&F report, draft financial strategy, parking tariffs,
- 14 Dec: Full Council

0161/2324

## FINANCE

### 1. Payment Schedules

1.1 It was proposed by Councillor I Wellings, seconded by Councillor C Aked  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** that the accounts amounting to £117,472.56 be approved for payment.

1.2 It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor R Ireland  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** that Councillors C Aked and R Connolly will be authorising bank payments, verifying bank statements/reconciliations and authorising payroll on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

1.3 Members noted that Councillors N Cooper and K Sawbridge  
authorised bank payments and verified bank statements for September 2023.

### 2. Town Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.  
(Reconciled sum of all bank accounts (£151,065.43).

3. Members noted that the Budget Summary report, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023, can be viewed on the Town Council website.

### 4. Balance Sheet

Members noted that the Balance Sheet, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023, can be viewed on the Town Council website.

Councillor D Cooper asked for a link to the website to be added onto future agendas for both the Budget report and the Balance Sheet.

5. It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor R Connolly  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the appointment of Councillor A Chetter to the Finance Committee



0162/2324

**DRAFT BUDGET 2024/2025**

The Chair of the Finance Committee, Councillor N Cooper, gave Members a verbal update on the discussions that had taken place at the recent Finance Committee meeting. She informed Members of the changes that had been made to the first draft budget after challenging some of the figures; changes shown below:

<b>Income</b>		
1000 – Lettings	College House/Annexe/Castle Hall/Severn Park	Increase to £25,400; last year's budget figure
1050 – Recharge	Bridgnorth Community Hall	Apply an inflationary increase (CPI)
1100 – Cemetery Fees		Increase to £45,000; last year's budget figure
1450 – Car Park Fees	Severn Park car park	Increase to £93,000
<b>Expenditure</b>		
4185 – Equipment	All areas	Reduce to £3,000 (take out photocopier purchase)
4204 – Tree Management	All areas	Reduce to £8,000, the current budget

One main item for discussion were the car parking fees in Severn Park that have not been changed since April 2022. A decision was made to increase the target income by £20,000 and the RFO was tasked with looking at the structure of the charges and bring a proposal to change the structure to generate an additional £20k of income based on the current activity.

Councillor N Cooper informed the meeting that there are four decisions that the Committee would like the Council to give a steer on:

- i) Market fees – Look to increase by CPI to generate around £2k of additional income
- ii) Reducing the grants budget to 1% of the previous precept instead of 2%; another £6.5k worth of income
- iii) Staffing costs. Members were informed that staffing accounts for 65% of Councils expenditure. It would be unwise not to look at where staffing changes could be made and at the consequences this could make to services levels. The Town Clerk is to investigate. A steer is needed from Council with regards to the amount that could be looked at; maybe £15k
- iv) The pay award contingency could be reduced to 5% from 6%.

The second draft budget, from the RFO, included an increase in expenditure of £6,000 for property repairs and £4,500 for events. The RFO explained that the increase for property repairs had been included following discussions with the Property Manager. The increase in the events budget was to make provision for a Tea Party, removal costs for the Castle Grounds piano and a potential D-Day event. As the D-Day event was a one-off event, Members stated it would be an appropriate charge to the General Reserve rather than a charge to the base budget. The £4,500 is to be removed from the budget.

Members debated the points raised by the Chair of Finance Committee and spoke about contracts and leases that were due for renewal and asked Officers to ensure that best value was achieved with regards to contracts. The RFO assured Members that this was already the case. The RFO informed the meeting that the draft budget has been based on all current services and that a reduction or a change in services is a decision for Council only. Members



are to be sent a condensed draft budget which shows services//projects/activities that are not essential for the running of the Town Council. Members are to make their comments known to the RFO with regards to these services and an Extraordinary Finance Committee meeting is to be held in December 2023 where Members comments will be evaluated. This will enable options to be brought to the January 2024 Town Council meeting for decisions to be made, by full Council, with regards to the level of precept for 2024/2025.

0163/2324 **PROPOSED BORROWING CONSULTATION TIMETABLE**

Members noted the borrowing consultation timetable and appreciated the amount of work that was needed to facilitate the consultation.

A reminder was given that a majority vote was needed for the borrowing proposal to go ahead. The default position would be a one off payment, in the region of £100, as project is safety critical and the works must be done.

The Chair asked for assistance from all Councillors with regards to the 'drop in' sessions.

0164/2324 **LOW TOWN COMMUNITY HALL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members were informed that the Management Committee of the community hall had, had sight of the Terms of Reference and were content.

It was proposed by Councillor R Connolly, seconded by Councillor S Barlow  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the Terms of Reference for the Bridgnorth Community Hall

0165/2324 **BRIDGNORTH FUTURE PARTNERSHIP**

It was proposed by Councillor I Wellings, seconded by Councillor A Chetter  
Abstentions by Councillor D Cooper and N Cooper

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor I Wellings (Deputy Mayor) be the representative for Bridgnorth Town Council with Councillors S Barlow and R Ireland being the reserve members should the Deputy Mayor be unavailable.

0166/2324 **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

Members discussed the following items for inclusion on future agendas:

Budget re-iteration  
Borrowing Consultation update  
Community Governance review

0167/2324 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was proposed by Councillor S Barlow, seconded by Councillor I Wellings  
Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RESOLVED:** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded.



**0168/2324 PERSONNEL REPORT**

Members received a verbal update from the Chair of the Personnel Committee and noted the comments.

It was proposed by Councillor C Aked, seconded by Councillor S Barlow

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the appointment of Councillor A Chetter to the Personnel Committee.

**0169/2324 UPDATE ON THE RETAINING WALL**

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor S Barlow

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to give retrospective approval for the amended works to phases 3c & 3d as shown below:

Phase 3c to have the remedial works completed.

Phase 3d to have slope monitoring put in place and regular checks and monitoring to be undertaken by the structural engineer in the first instance every week up to Christmas. This is to monitor any movement in the area. This will be reviewed and modified by the Project Team and Structural Engineer to see if the frequency can be reduced without increasing risk.

Noting that the current cost for this is the same as the costing for the scaffolding for 6 months.

**0170/2324 FLORAL PROVISION TENDER AWARD 2024**

It was proposed by Councillor N Cooper, seconded by Councillor R Ireland

Unanimously agreed by all Councillors

**RESOLVED:** to approve the quotation from Littlefords Nursery for 1 year at a cost of £11,321 to provide the floral provision for 2024.

END: 21.10